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Hundreds attend Baldwin Park adult school rally

By Kendra Ablaza, Correspondent
Posted: 04/23/2010 06:16:28 PM PDT



Community members, teachers, students and administrators at the Pro Education Rally to support the adult education program within Baldwin Park Unified School District along Ramona Blvd. at Morgan Park in Baldwin Park, Friday, April 23, 2010. (SGVN/Staff Photo by Eric Reed)

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BALDWIN PARK - Hundreds of people gathered at Morgan Park on Thursday afternoon demanding their adult education classes back.

The Baldwin Park Adult and Community Education campus laid off 30 teachers last month, eliminated adult summer classes and reduced the number of offerings for next fall, saving the district \$3 million, according to Baldwin Park Unified School District officials,

Many of those at the park chanted "Save our schools" and held up signs as cars passed by on Baldwin Park and Ramona boulevards.

Concepcion Jorge, 55, and Nita Lassere, 70, are in a drama class at the school, which is one of the 30 courses where instructors are being laid off.

"There's no other place in the San Gabriel

Photo Gallery

[Rally to support adult education](#)

Valley that offers a drama class for seniors," Lassere said. "Most of the time I get depressed during the week, and getting up and going to this class on weekends stabilizes me. I don't know what I'm going to do now."

District officials said they don't have enough money to avoid cutting classes.

John Kerr, director of Adult and Community Education, said that the adult education budget is being reduced by \$3 million, leaving them with half of what the school needs to keep all classes open.

The district was forced to cut part-time teachers first, even if they instructors taught popular courses, Kerr said.

"By law, tenure teachers have priority," he said. "There are limited ESL



Classes, fine arts classes, health and fitness classes. We're trying the best we can right now to find ways to restore those."

Kerr said the city has applied for grants to help keep their adult school running as normal but so far they have not received any responses.

Linda Benavides, 55, starting taking water aerobics classes 15 years ago when she was first diagnosed with fibromyalgia. She called the class a "lifesaver" and said she would not even be able to move today if it were not for the program.

"What young people might not understand is that most of these classes are not like an extra class to learn a new skill," she said. "This is what keeps you going. You want to feel like you are able to... contribute something to society and are self functioning."

Jim Christensen, a teacher/instructor for Baldwin Park Unified School District, said that the school had 134 teachers before the lay-offs began.

Now the school has 49, he said.

Courses that used to be free are now \$25. And the cost of business courses is scheduled to raise from \$35 to \$150, Christensen said.

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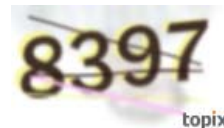
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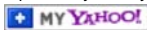

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